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Soldiers

The Official U.S. Army Magazine

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Stories home **the** enlisted travel **strength**
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ceremonies challenge rest & relaxation **America** **Soldiers** selfless **Army**
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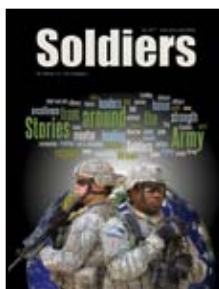


Soldiers

July 2011 • VOLUME 66, NO. 7



A Soldier supporting U.S. Army Cadet Command's Leader Development and Assessment Course checks the fit of protective equipment on an ROTC cadet. Around 6,000 cadets come to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., every summer to complete the training, which is required before they can be commissioned. (Photo by Jesse Beals)



[On the Cover]

Stories from around the Army. (Cover illustration by Peggy Frierson)

[Coming Next Month]

August 2011 - The Army Research Lab.



ROTC cadets prove their strength and endurance with the Army Physical Fitness Test during Operation Warrior Forge 2010, which is also known as the Leader Development and Assessment Course, the Army's largest annual training exercise. Around 6,000 cadets come to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., every summer to complete the training they must have before commissioning in the Army. See articles beginning on page 18. (Photo by Jesse Beals)

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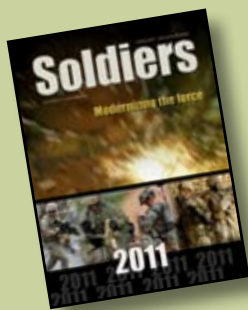
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July 1, 2011

Dear readers,

As a result of Department of Defense initiatives aimed at reducing overhead costs and improving efficiency across the DOD, and recommendations by senior Defense Media Activity leaders, all service flagship publications will cease hard-copy printing and distribution in the coming fiscal year.

The October issue of Soldiers will be the final monthly print edition of the magazine. Beginning with the November issue, the magazine will be provided via an online-only format, although Soldiers is scheduled to print one annual issue for limited distribution in the third quarter of fiscal year 2012.

Based on recent studies, DOD leaders have concluded that an online-only version of each of the four military service publications would "increase the magazines' reach across their target audience, improve the immediacy of content and provide the capability to update content more frequently."

Throughout the transition planning process, Soldiers magazine will be available online at www.army.mil/soldiers, both as a content-management system-fed Web page and in a downloadable PDF, just as it currently exists. We will continue to provide the same quality content we have since 1946, when the first iteration of Soldiers, the "Army Information Digest," was printed.

You can fan the magazine on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SoldiersMag, or follow [@SoldiersMag](https://twitter.com/SoldiersMag) on Twitter, to remain informed about the changes to our Web presence as we transition to the dynamic, interactive online presence our readers deserve. Soldiers welcomes your comments and suggestions via these social media venues as we strive to provide the stories and images you want to see in your online magazine.

On behalf of the Soldiers magazine staff, I extend my sincerest appreciation to each and every Soldier, Family member, veteran, retiree and civilian reader. It is my honor to be able to continue to share the Army's stories with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Carrie L. McLeroy".

Carrie L. McLeroy
Editor in chief

www.army.mil/soldiers
FY 2012

The final honor

The Old Guard Soldiers conduct
Arlington funerals with decorum,
respect

Story by Elizabeth M. Collins

THE image is as tragic as it is iconic: A grieving widow or mother sobs and clutches Old Glory like a lifeline while a proud, decorated Soldier in dress blues and white gloves kneels and murmurs condolences “on behalf of a grateful nation.”

Someday those words of gratitude might mean something to her, might make her proud instead of sad. But today, they are a cold comfort. The bereaved could equally be a husband, father, sibling, son or daughter—they are all alike in their devastation, in wondering how life can possibly go on. A loved one is gone, along with their dreams, hopes and plans for the future.

It’s not easy for the Soldiers who conduct the funeral ceremonies either. Handing that flag over is “extraordinarily tough,” said Staff Sgt. Shawn Hall of The Old Guard, who has had the responsibility numerous times, although the task is usually given to a military chaplain or flag officer. It’s also “an absolute, utter honor,” he continued—the very least the nation can do to honor the men and women who gave the last full measure of devotion.

Soldiers from the 3rd Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard’s unit designation), perform as many as six funerals a day at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. They serve as casket bearers, like Hall (who most recently was the memorial affairs noncommissioned officer in charge), members of the firing company or the honor guard and horse-riding caisson Soldiers. By the end of a two- or three-year tour in The Old Guard, it’s not uncommon for a Soldier to have performed 100 or more funerals for servicemembers, from veterans of World War II and Korea to young Soldiers killed in action in Iraq and Afghanistan.

(Left) Old Guard Soldiers carry an empty casket into Old Post Chapel on Fort Myer, Va., while rehearsing a funeral. (Photo by Elizabeth M. Collins)

It’s not easy for the Soldiers who conduct the funeral ceremonies. Handing that flag over is “extraordinarily tough.”

Old Guard Soldiers also spend a lot of time training for those funerals. They go through at least three weeks of intensive training when they join the regiment, but it doesn’t end there. Any time a Soldier isn’t at a funeral or ceremony is spent rehearsing, practicing key portions like the flag folding

and the 21-gun salute, which requires precise, synchronized movements.

“It’s all about timing,” Spc. Robert Ververs, who serves in Alpha Company, 4th Battalion’s firing platoon, said.

“Everything has to be in sync. When we’re in the (firing) party, your hands, your shots—everything has to be in



Jacqueline M. Hames

Soldiers from the 3rd Infantry Regiment, The Old Guard, form ranks during funeral rehearsal. They later fold a flag at a mock-gravesite.



Elizabeth M. Collins



(Left) Old Guard Soldiers practice removing the casket from a hearse and transferring it to the chapel. The Soldiers carry the casket an average of 100 meters during a funeral service.

(Below) Soldiers place the practice casket onto the caisson before draping the flag and escorting it to a mock gravesite.

(Inset) Capt. John P. Rodriguez hands a flag to a Soldier playing the next of kin in a mock funeral staged by The Old Guard on Fort Myer, Va.



sync, which is the hardest part. Your shots are supposed to be identical so when you have all seven shots ringing, it sounds just as one.” It’s not an easy task.

Nor is carrying a 300-700-pound casket an average of 100 meters while marching in cadence. Depending on the funeral, the load may be split between six or eight Soldier-casket bearers, but that 100 (occasionally 300) meters still feels like a very long distance, Hall said—especially if the casket is on the heavy end. Once, Old Guard casket bearers even had to carry a 1,200-pound casket up the steps of the Capitol, not an experience Hall recalls fondly.

“There’s no doubt about it,” he said. “Those boys are studs. Obviously doing something day in and day out, with the strict movements that we have to adhere to, it taxes the body. It really does. So the level of fitness has to be above the ability to just do a lot of pushups. It requires different muscle strength and conditioning. That’s why we practice with weighted caskets.”

Their Army Physical Fitness Test scores alone are at least 250, and there’s a height requirement too—at least 5 feet, 10 inches for men and 5 feet, 8 inches for women. They’re even assigned to individual companies based on height. Their size matters because Soldiers in The Old Guard, an all-volunteer unit, often represent the Army

at high-profile events and ceremonies such as presidential inaugurations and funerals, so they need to stand out and look sharp on TV.

“We want to put our best foot forward,” Hall continued. “Like, ‘Look, this is our Army,’ you know? ‘These are our Soldiers.’ We really want to have an overpowering presence and appearance. We want to look the part.”

Because Old Guard companies are so in-demand, they sometimes travel around the country for months at a time (especially during the summer) to participate in different ceremonies and events that spread the Army’s message. It’s easy to get out of practice when they’re away, so the Soldiers rehearse every aspect of a funeral once they return under the watchful eyes of battalion and regimental leaders. They actually grade the Soldiers’ performance, so it’s a high-stakes training exercise, explained Capt. John P. Rodriguez, a platoon leader with Alpha Co., 4th Bn.

“Our company has been out of the cemetery for about six months because of different ceremonies we’ve been doing in D.C. and around the country,” he said. “So before we go back to the



Elizabeth M. Collins

cemetery for the (upcoming) season, we do several weeks of training to make sure that we are up to the standard.” The casket is empty and the burial plot is roped off rather than dug, but other than that everything is the same. Someone even portrays a grieving relative while a Soldier hands over a flag.

“What you’re going to see today

is a full-honors funeral,” he continued before a rehearsal last fall. “This would be given to any (servicemember) who dies on active duty in Afghanistan or Iraq, or any officer up to the grade of lieutenant colonel. Soldiers who die at different ranks or retired Soldiers would get a slightly different ceremony.

“Initially we’re doing a chapel

sequence, so the hearse will arrive and we will transfer the casket from the hearse into the chapel for a memorial ceremony,” Rodriguez said. “Then we will take the casket out of the chapel once the service is complete and transfer it onto a caisson. We will escort the remains on the caisson to the gravesite, which for today’s purpose is a mock



Jacqueline M. Hames



grave set up on a field nearby. There's a short memorial service at the gravesite. Then we render final honors, do the 21-gun salute, play taps and present the flag to the next of kin."

They did a great job, said Hall, one of the evaluators, but the training doesn't stop there. Once a company has been assigned an upcoming funeral, they continue preparing up until the last minute, said Capt. Paul Brown, The Old Guard's regimental ceremonies, special events and memorial affairs officer. He's also served as the officer in charge during funerals. The night before a funeral, the Soldiers rehearse the sequence and prepare their uniforms, making sure they're perfectly creased and spotless. The morning of a funeral, they go to Arlington before the cemetery opens and inspect the gravesite so everyone knows where to march and stand. An hour before the ceremony, they'll talk it through and rehearse one last time.

"The hardest part is that regardless of conditions, we have to do it right. It has to be 100-percent correct. It's an honor because I'm here to make sure that everything is done and that everything is efficient and we do the best that we can. For the Family, this is the last thing the Army's able to do

for them, for their Family member's sacrifice. This is often the last thing they will see from the military. It has to be the best," Brown said, adding that he volunteered for The Old Guard specifically to serve at funerals and honor the dead.

One of the toughest portions of their training is how to maintain ceremonial composure. No matter how emotional a funeral is or how much a Family cries, Old Guard Soldiers must be able maintain their own composure and military bearing when putting their comrades to rest. They must perform their duties and honor the late Soldier while not intruding on the Family's grief. It takes practice and self-control.

Nothing can truly prepare that Soldier for the day he will have to stand at attention on the thick green carpet of grass at Arlington, stone-faced in the presence of such heartache, however. The only way to get through such poignant, painful moments is to focus on the mission, Brown said. He thinks about the next step, the next command, the next task.

Old Guard Soldiers cannot offer grieving Family members a hug or a shoulder to cry on—performing a flawless funeral ceremony is the only form

of comfort they can provide. Those Families are often sources of inspiration to Soldiers of The Old Guard, a reason to work a little harder, to stand a little straighter.

"For the casket team, it serves as a motivator, as odd as that may sound," Hall said. "Everyone's going to get the same honors and everything is going to look great for everybody, but sometimes a nerve is just struck. You connect with it on a personal level and you just say, 'You know what? Let's give it the best we've got.' Any amount of fatigue you may have felt carrying the casket to its final resting place or anything else, it just goes away. It helps keep your mind strong to push through that...because you want to pay that Family the proper respect.

"Me personally, when I hear a Family (crying), I actually focus on the sound of the emotion. And then my thoughts would go to the young man or woman, or older man or woman, who was in that casket, and I would start thinking about what their life was like in their time in service and stuff like that, and that makes me want to be even better," he continued.

Hall would sometimes watch as grown children or grandchildren finally realized the significance of their fathers or grandfathers' service, learned that the family men they knew and loved had once made major sacrifices for their country. Those instances of dawning pride and patriotism in adult children warmed Hall's heart and sharply contrasted with moments that chilled him to the bone.

As the father of two young daughters, his hardest funerals were always when a young Soldier left small children behind. He would look at them as he presented the flag and see his own little girls.

(Right) Caisson Soldiers from The Old Guard escort an empty, flag-draped casket to a mock gravesite on Fort Myer, Va.

Old Guard Soldiers march in cadence behind the caisson during a funeral rehearsal.



“They’re seeing their daddy in me and I’m seeing my child in them, and to be able to walk that razor’s edge of professionalism while holding emotions at bay...that’s something else. But there’s also, at the end of the day, a feeling of fulfillment that you get because that child, when they grow up and see that flag sitting up on that mantle, and that’s their memory of their father, they’re going to remember me too,” he explained.

And at the back of his mind is the fear that next time it could be his own funeral, a sentiment that Ververs echoed.

“I just try to think that if I was in that position, that if I was dead and having a military funeral, that hopefully there would be Soldiers out there who would respect me and try to do the best job they can every time they’re out there.” ♦

Editor’s note: For more information about *The Old Guard* and military funerals at Arlington, visit <http://www.army.mil/info/organization/unitsandcommands/commandstructure/theold-guard/> and <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil>.



(Background photo) Soldiers stand ready to move the casket into the chapel.
(Inset) Soldiers practice removing the casket from a hearse.



Jacqueline M. Hames



Jacqueline M. Hames





(Clockwise from center) Austin Ellwein, Katie Ellwein, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Fred Ellwein, Sgt. Maj. Dianne Ellwein and Tyler "TJ" Ellwein. TJ, an Eagle Scout, dedicated more than 400 hours to leading a cleanup effort at Arlington National Cemetery, Va.

Scout's honor

Eagle Scouts' projects reflect American spirit

Story by Rob McIlvaine

THE Boy Scouts of America is the nation's foremost youth program of character development and values-based leadership training. For 100 years, the award-winning Boys' Life magazine has chronicled scouting's commitment to give young Americans the tools, experiences and knowledge they need to make the world a better place.

Tyler "TJ" Ellwein and Jacob Netzel were among four Boy Scouts selected by Boys' Life as finalists for the 2011 American Spirit Award. The award, presented by the Congressional

Medal of Honor Foundation, recognizes one or more individuals who demonstrate extraordinary skill, professionalism and a spirit of excellence in a challenging situation. Three of the four nominees, including Ellwein and Netzel, are Eagle Scouts. Ellwein and Netzel are also sons of Soldiers.

To earn Eagle Scout, a Boy Scout must progress through the scout ranks; earn 21 merit badges; serve six months in a troop leadership position; and plan, develop and lead a service project. Scouts must also take part in a scoutmaster conference and successfully complete an Eagle Scout board of review.

In 2010, only five percent of all Boy Scouts earned scouting's highest advancement rank. Two of those young men charted their paths to Eagle by honoring military men and women.

For his service project, Ellwein, 19, from Troop 1437 in Davidsonville, Md., logged more than 400 hours leading the cleanup and beautification of Chaplains Hill at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. Netzel, 17, from Troop 40 in Fayetteville, N.C., raised \$40,000 over four years to construct a memorial for fallen members of the 3rd Special Forces Group, headquartered at Fort Bragg, N.C., for his project.

Dedication runs deep in the Ellwein Family.

Until he was in the sixth grade, Tyler knew his parents as teachers in the Rapid City School District and as members of the South Dakota Army National Guard.

They were dedicated parents who, for one weekend every month and two weeks every summer, attended their



Boy Scouts pose in front of the monuments on Chaplains Hill at Arlington National Cemetery, Va., with their brushes and buckets. (Photo courtesy of the Ellwein Family)



Tyler "TJ" Ellwein, left, oversees headstone cleaning. Also pictured are Garrett Nixon (standing) and Michael Venter. (Photo by Sgt. Maj. Dianne Ellwein)

drills and training. Not too unusual, until Sept. 11, 2001.

"After 9/11, my parents felt like they wanted to contribute in a much larger way, so they applied for Active Guard/Reserve positions in their respective fields. They were both selected, so in January of my sixth grade year (2004), we moved to Woodbridge, Va.," Ellwein said.

The move was difficult for him because he had spent the first 12 years of his life in the same town, neighborhood, school and scout troop, and on the same sports teams.

"It was so difficult for me to adjust to something new, especially during the middle of the year. Even finding a Boy Scout troop was difficult, and I actually didn't get involved with scouting until almost a year later," he said.

His parents, both senior leaders, traveled a lot, but then his father received an assignment far enough away that after nine months of searching

they were able to find a place halfway between their jobs.

"Then my dad was deployed to Iraq, twice, and that was really difficult because I worried about his safety every day," Ellwein said, adding that many military kids grow up not knowing anything different.

"Military Families make extraordinary sacrifices to preserve the freedoms our country has grown to depend on. I didn't realize that until I became a military kid.

"I couldn't be more proud of my parents and what they do. They definitely were my inspiration for my Eagle Scout project."

His mom is the sergeant major of the Chaplain Corps at the National Guard Bureau in Arlington, Va., and his dad is the commander of The Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Va.

"My dad was a Cub Scout so I started scouting when I was in the first grade. We also had a tradition, started by my grandfather. Every time I got promoted to a new rank, my dad handed down his Cub Scout scarf to me that he had worn when he was a little boy, which was handed down to him by his father. We've since handed down those scarves to my little brother, Austin, who is now a Webelos," Ellwein said.

Although his dad only made it to Webelos in the Cub Scouts, Austin will receive TJ's Eagle scarf when he becomes Eagle, too.

"During my Eagle ceremony, I put

my Boy Scout bolo tie around his neck and challenged him to remain in scouting and I promised him that if he made it to Eagle, that I would be honored to pass my scarf on to him," Ellwein said.

When TJ was little, he said he loved participating in all the activities scouting had to offer.

"I enjoyed being a scout because I could stay up in the wilderness all night with my friends, cooking our own meals with s'mores for dessert and then telling ghost stories around the campfire. The next day we went fishing and canoeing," he said.

But as he got older, Ellwein found scouting more difficult because he was also involved in sports and other school activities.

"And being military, I didn't get to stay with the same troop year after year. There were even times when I felt like quitting because I had been in three troops throughout my Boy Scout years." Despite the challenges, Ellwein continued is scouting pursuits.

"I've always attended the Chaplain Corps anniversary celebrations on Chaplains Hill at Arlington National Cemetery and watched the chief of chaplains lay a wreath each year at the Tomb of the Unknowns," Ellwein said.

In 2009, the Chaplain Corps celebrated the 100th anniversary of the U.S. Army Chaplain Assistant.

"My project on Chaplains Hill was done to commemorate that celebration. My mom is the senior enlisted advisor for ARNG affairs to the chief of chaplains, and she is the Chaplain Corps sergeant major and career field manager of the chaplain assistants at National Guard Bureau. She oversees the careers of some 850 chaplain assistants. This was a great way to honor her service, and also that of my father's in Iraq," he said.

The Chaplain Corps motto is to "Nurture the living, care for the wounded and honor the dead." Ellwein thought his project would be a great way to honor the dead. After all, the chaplain assistant would do anything for the chaplain to ensure they could provide ministry to Soldiers, and they would honor them until the day they died.

"My project was very symbolic of what a chaplain assistant would do for a chaplain. The work was very tedious—scrubbing bird droppings, algae, moss, precipitation and other dirty items—from 400 headstones, but it reminded me of what Jesus would do for his disciples. He washed their feet, which was a very humble act," Ellwein said.

His friends gave up a weekend to wash the headstones of fallen heroes to honor the anniversary of the chaplain assistant.

"This was a great way for my friends to honor another generation of heroes, which we don't often get an opportunity to do. When we were doing the project in preparation for Memorial Day and President (Barack) Obama's inaugural Memorial Day address (which 75,000 visitors attended), many visitors stopped by and took pictures of us. They seemed amazed that 40 teenagers would be spending a beautiful Sunday afternoon scrubbing headstones," he said.

He remembers one elderly veteran who had tears in his eyes as he shook his hand and thanked him for serving those who had served.

"I'll never forget that. I got a lump in my throat, and tears welled in my eyes as well. It felt so good to be doing something for someone else."

Between 4.5 and 5 million people visit Arlington each year, but there was no place to display the cemetery's informational brochures. Ellwein designed and supervised the construction of two rotating oak racks that would hold 1,200 brochures. These brochure racks were dedicated at the visitor's center on Veterans Day after Obama's speech.

"Coincidentally, my dad had just returned home from his second deployment to Iraq on Nov. 9 and was able to witness my dedication of the brochure display racks. It was a blessing to have him there. Both of my projects were dedicated on military observances—Memorial Day and Veterans Day. It made my project even more meaningful because I wanted to honor our military," he said.

The Netzel Family, too, understands selfless service and sacrifice.

"I appreciate the numerous places

I've been able to visit because of my father's assignments," Netzel said. I've lived in Germany, New York, South Carolina, Kansas, Oklahoma and North Carolina and have experienced so many things that shaped my perspective on life.

"But it was hard when I was younger. I would make good friends and then have to leave after only a few years," he said.

Netzel said he participated in every organizational day that his father's units hosted.

"I really enjoyed the festivities that each group provided. I also helped out each year with the Memorial Day wreath-laying ceremony," Netzel said.

But it was scouting that kept him grounded.

"I got into scouting when I was six years old as a Tiger Cub and quickly grew to like it. But in my first years as a Boy Scout, the only thing that drove me was to get Eagle as early as possible. I knew it looked good on college resumes and I wanted to be a step above my peers.

"However, during my trail from the ranks of Life to Eagle, I realized that it wasn't about me. Selfless service is what keeps our communities alive and thriving and I had to do my part," he said.

Netzel enjoyed trying new things with his troop. To get himself motivated, he read articles in Boys' Life about scouts canoeing 30 miles in a week, surviving off nothing but what they could carry.

"I want to challenge myself so I



Jacob Netzel at the completed 3rd Special Forces Group Memorial Walk. (Photo by Tammy Netzel)



Jacob Netzel and other scouts work diligently to complete the walkway honoring the 28 Soldiers of the 3rd Special Forces Group killed during Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom. (Photo by Tammy Netzel)



Col. Mark Schwartz, commander of 3rd Special Forces Group, congratulates Jacob Netzel for his work on a walkway commemorating 3rd SFG Soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

encouraged my fellow scouts to take more adventurous camping trips. We did a high adventure canoe trip during a summer camp where we had to use what we could carry for the whole week, and had to canoe miles from camp site to camp site,” he said.

That first trip taught the boys how to adapt and overcome when their campsite flooded and they had to work together to solve their dilemma. On their second wilderness survival trip, they could only use what they were able to carry with the added restriction of no tent—they had to make their own shelters from found materials.

His dad, Lt. Col. Thomas Netzel, is deputy commander of Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek, Fort Story, Va., near Virginia Beach. His mom is also affiliated with the military. She is a Department of Defense Education Activity 8th grade English teacher at Albritton Junior High School on Fort Bragg, N.C.

For Netzel, the path to Eagle started in April 2006, when he began tossing around ideas for an Eagle Scout project at home. At the time, his father was the resource management officer for 3rd Special Forces Group, and he had a suggestion.

“My dad said his group didn’t have a memorial to all the guys who had died in service. But they couldn’t do it within the group, and it would take a lot of work by someone to get it done. He told me to think long and hard before committing to it, because this was something that would be difficult but very special. A couple of weeks later, we sat down and I said, ‘I want to do this.’”

Jacob had another, more personal, reason to take on the project. A year earlier, his scoutmaster had been killed while deployed with the 82nd Airborne Division in Afghanistan.

“I knew what I had to do to get my project done the minute my packet was approved by my troop’s

district, and that’s when things became more complicated. The first challenge was to raise \$40,000 for the memorial stones. I did everything imaginable in order to gain the necessary funds. I spent numerous eight-hour days in front of grocery stores collecting donations, went knocking on doors in neighborhoods and even talked to the Soldiers before their physical training exercises,” he said.

He learned a lot about people in the process, hearing some special stories along the way that touched him deeply.

“When I knocked on one door, a man in a wheelchair answered. He wrote a check for \$100 on the spot as he told me he was a member of the very unit for which I was building the memorial walk.

“When an article was published in the newspaper telling people where they could send donations, a woman in her 80s sent me a check for \$5 that arrived in my mailbox the same day the paper came out. She wrote a note telling me she was so moved about my project, she sent me all she could afford. She must have read the article early that morning and gotten the check in the mail immediately,” Netzel said.

After a long year, all the money needed to complete the project had been raised. But then the project hit a snag and was delayed further by a Supreme Court case that caused the military to put a moratorium on all gifted memorials.

“To overcome this, I had to seek approval (through) the chain of command as high as the secretary of the Army. But I completed my project Sept. 11, 2010. It was dedicated and gifted to the 3rd SFG, Dec. 10, 2010.

The end result was 28 headstones honoring the memories of 3rd SFG Soldiers killed while serving in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Although neither Ellwein nor Netzel received the 2011 American Spirit Award, they said the fact that their Eagle projects will honor Soldiers and their Families for years to come is the real reward.

For more information, visit <http://scouting.org/>. ♦



Preston says goodbye

Story by Jacqueline M. Hames

ONE of the most valuable things a leader can leave behind is a lesson—a piece of information or experience that others can use to improve. The longest-serving sergeant major of the Army left this lesson: Take what you have learned and pass it on.

Kenneth O. Preston, the 13th SMA, retired in March after serving seven years in the position. During his tenure, he helped shape the way the Army manned, equipped and trained the force, and advised noncommissioned officers to teach others whenever possible.

Preston joined the Army straight out of high school, after considering all the services.

“I didn’t necessarily have the grades that would get me a scholarship, wasn’t going to get rich throwing a football, so I just looked for an opportunity to get away from the small town that I grew up in, in the mountains of western Maryland,” Preston explained.

Though he originally wanted to do something that involved architecture, Preston signed up for the armor career field at the prompting of a recruiter and in March of 1975, was sworn in. He made the rank of sergeant two years later.

Preston has been stationed all over the world and has deployed to Kuwait. During his career, he taught armor officer basic courses at Fort Knox, Ky., went on an exchange tour in Britain (where he taught scout and tank weapons systems) and served as the deputy commandant at the NCO Academy in 1992.

He also served as a cavalry scout and tank commander during his 35-year career, and as the command sergeant major for the Combined Joint Force Task Force 7 in Baghdad.

“Every unit and assignment I’ve ever been assigned to has been a wonderful experience,” he said. “I’ve never had a bad assignment or experience as I look back over my career.”

Preston took his position as the SMA, Jan. 15, 2004. “I fell in as a mem-

ber of a team,” he said, acknowledging that the efforts of the total force serve as the foundation for the Army’s achievements. His first challenge was helping the chief of staff of the Army—then Gen. Peter Schoomaker—man, equip and train large numbers of Soldiers who were forward deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan.

“As sergeant major of the Army, your goal is to support the chief of staff of the Army and contribute in making the Army a success,” Preston said. “And my view of the SMA is a force provider.” Preston’s goal in that role was to help the units, leaders and organizations to be successful.

“The focus in coming here was manning, training and equipping... making sure our Soldiers had the best equipment, the best training, and had the right skill sets and the right numbers of people in their units or organizations for the missions which they were being asked to do.”

The active duty Army was trans-

forming into a modular force in 2004, Preston explained. “We had to do a lot of balancing in the Army. There were a lot of formations that were heavily weighted to the Cold War threat...we had a lot of heavy forces and not enough of the stability kind of forces that we need to be a success.”

Since then, the Army has grown by almost 100,000 Soldiers, and Preston said the force is better equipped than it was at the start of his time as the Army’s top enlisted Soldier.

“If you look at photos of Soldiers in 2004 and you compare them to photos of Soldiers now, it’s like looking at Soldiers from the Korean War. In comparison... we’ve come such a long way in all the different types of equipment—not only our uniforms, but our gear, our body armor, all the equipment to protect a Soldier out on the battlefield,” Preston said. “The whole transformation of the Army, in my mind, has been the biggest accomplishment that’s really taken place.”

Training has also become more relevant over the past seven years, he said. The Army has taken all the lessons learned on the battlefield and incorporated them into training, so the force is

better prepared for wartime missions. Preston believes that professional military education is key to supporting an Army at war. “We have taken an Army that was the best Army in the world and taken it to a whole new level.”

As a former instructor, Preston emphasized the importance for NCOs and other Soldiers to take every opportunity to teach and become subject matter experts in their fields. He attributed his military success and strength of character to NCOs who imparted their knowledge and mentored him throughout his career.

“The most valuable contribution that any senior noncommissioned officer can give back to his or her Soldiers is to be a teacher,” Preston said. He hopes that as the Army increases dwell time between deployments over the next few years, NCOs will take on the roles and responsibilities of teachers and SMEs, positions currently held by contractors due to the short deployment cycle.

Though Preston had command experience before becoming the SMA, he soon realized that he didn’t know as much as he thought about his new responsibilities and the Army. He found a plethora of information at his finger-

tips, however, from historical files to contemporary reports, and he studied them at length. Reviewing this information helped him to understand the Army’s decision-making process across the manning, equipping and training spectrum, which in turn made him a better enlisted leader.

Preston said he advised his successor, new Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III, who was the first enlisted commandant of the Sergeants Major Academy, to command and learn the Army from a historical perspective.

“Learn where we were in 2004, learn how and why we evolved to where we are today, because (that) will really help in understanding not only where we’ve been and where we are today, but where we want to continue to strive for the future,” Preston said.

Upon retirement, Preston said he planned to go back to Maryland, “back to the farm,” to figure out the next chapter in his life.

“I like to joke around with the young Soldiers: ‘I don’t know what I’m going to be when I grow up,’” Preston said. ♦

Kenneth O. Preston during basic training in 1975. (Photo courtesy of the Preston Family)



Then-Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston (right), and Sgt. 1st Class Dale Green, Army Field Support Battalion, Kuwait, prepare to drive an M1A1 tank at Camp Arifjan, May 27, 2006. (Photo by Spc. Michael R. Noggle)



American Samoa Army Reserve Soldiers teach then-Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston to perform a traditional war dance during his visit to the island, July 17, 2005. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Reeba Critser)





Army launches 'Net Zero' pilot program

SEVENTEEN Army installations are participating in a pilot program aimed at conserving energy and water and re-using waste.

"Operational energy is a critical focus to the whole Department of Defense," said Katherine Hammack, assistant secretary of the Army for Installations, Energy and Environment.

Hammack said more than 100 installations around the world nominated themselves to participate, but selections had to be narrowed down to six in each category of energy, water and waste. Two installations—Fort Bliss, Texas, and Fort Carson, Colo.—will be practicing conservation strategies in all three categories to become integrated Net Zero sites.

The goal is for the installations to produce as much energy or water as they use, by the year 2020.

Hammack said some of the ways Army installations have already been reducing their energy consumption is by using solar panels, re-purposing used water, and retrofitting water fixtures such as faucets and shower heads.

Major Gen. Dana Pittard, the

commanding general of Fort Bliss, said his base is planning on building a 20-megawatt solar facility and a Net Zero housing community of at least 500 homes in the future. The community would be the first one of its kind in the Army.

He also explained that conserving



A two-megawatt solar panel array at Fort Carson, Colo., produces enough power for 540 homes, and is one example of the kinds of tools installations can use to achieve Net Zero energy usage.

water in Texas is a challenge because of the hot, dry climate there. He said Fort Bliss is working with the neighboring city of El Paso on how to better use grey water. Hammack noted that each installation will face unique challenges

to reduce energy consumption.

"We don't want to force each installation to subscribe to a certain strategy overall, but to highlight the many different ways to reach Net Zero," Hammack said.

The installations participating in the pilot for Net Zero energy by 2020 are: Fort Detrick, Md.; Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif.; Kwajalein Atoll, Republic of the Marshall Islands; Parks Reserve Forces Training Area, Calif.; Sierra Army Depot, Calif.; and West Point, N.Y.

The installations participating in the pilot for Net Zero water are: Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.; Camp Rilea, Ore.; Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico; Fort Riley, Kan.; Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.; and Tobyhanna Army Depot, Pa.

The installations participating in the pilot for Net Zero waste are: Fort Detrick; Fort Hood; Fort Hunter Liggett; Fort Polk; Joint Base Lewis-McChord; and U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr, Germany. ♦

—Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown for ARNEWS

Kevlar bike shorts among innovations in Army gear

HEAVYWEIGHT silk underwear and Kevlar bike shorts are among gear being designed to better protect future Soldiers.

Program Executive Office Soldier is constantly working to improve the equipment Soldiers wear and use, said Brig. Gen. Peter Fuller, who leads the organization.

The Kevlar bike shorts are intended to protect against debris from small blasts, Fuller said, adding that the silk underwear will also better protect the pelvic and groin areas.

Enhanced protection, fire-resistant uniforms and lighter loads—it's all about making a Soldier more decisive, Fuller said. In order to be decisive, he said, Soldiers need to be fit, awake and

aware. When a Soldier is freezing, can't see, is cramped or overloaded, his personal capabilities can be diminished.

That's why PEO Soldier came up with the Generation III Extended Cold Weather Clothing System as part of its fiscal year 2011 portfolio.

The new clothing includes silk-weight moisture-wicking undergarments, a water-repellent windbreaker and a new fleece jacket that mimics animal fur.

It's designed to provide Soldiers with a versatile, insulating system adaptable to varying operational and environmental conditions, Fuller said.

The new gear is light years ahead of what Fuller said he was issued as a young armor officer in the 1980s. He



The Generation III Extended Cold Weather Clothing System is designed to provide Soldiers a versatile, insulating system adaptable to varying conditions. (Photo by Jasmine Chopra)

recalled using World War II-era wool cold-weather gear in Germany. The Army is people-focused, and one way to support people is to provide them with the best kits, Fuller said. ♦

—Jasmine Chopra for ARNEWS

New email service will create efficiencies



Soldiers will be able to share calendars with users at other agencies after migrating to Enterprise Email. (Photo by Army G-6/CIO)

EMAIL users on Army networks can expect big changes soon, if Enterprise Email has not taken root on their

systems already.

About 20,000 Army users had already migrated to the new email as of May. Multi-installation migrations were expected to start in June, including installation of Enterprise Email for about 10,000 users at the Pentagon.

By end of the year, all Army users are expected to migrate to the new email being installed through a partnership with the Defense Information Systems Agency.

The new system will enable users with a CAC card to have military email access at any installation, and it will dramatically expand their global address list.

“Upon migration to Enterprise, 3.9 million addresses will appear in the (global address book) im-

mediately,” said Mike Krieger, Army deputy chief information officer for the G-6. “This will also allow us to share calendars with outside entities and this migration will allow us to have unlimited storage.”

Officials believe the effort will produce efficiencies beginning in fiscal year 2012 and generate annual savings exceeding \$100 million in years to come.

“The bill to the Army will go down every year,” Krieger said of the \$52 million spent on the project this year. “We brought this in on budget and we are delivering it on budget.”

Across the Department of Defense, the migration will affect 1.4 million unclassified network users and 200,000 secret network users. ♦

—Erin O. Stattel for ARNEWS

Army's helmet better than NFL helmet, study shows

THE results of a year-long study show the Army's Advanced Combat Helmet outperforms NFL equipment and other helmets when it comes to blunt trauma.

“We were asked to compare the impact response of NFL football pad systems and pad materials with the Army pad systems,” said William Moss, co-author of the report at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in the study directed by the Joint IED Defeat Organization.

The key findings showed that neither the NFL systems (Riddell and Xenith) nor Oregon Aero outperformed the current ACH pads in military-type impact scenarios (impact speeds from 10 to 20 feet per second).

The researchers also found, however, that a small increase in pad thickness—one-eighth to one-quarter inch more foam—significantly improved effectiveness of the helmet.

This brought up another problem, though. By adding thicker pads, the helmet had to increase in size, which meant an increase in weight, something



Brig. Gen. Peter Fuller, program executive officer for PEO Soldier, explains that searching for better helmets and other protective gear for the Army is a never-ending process. (Photo by Rob McIlvaine)

no Soldier wants.

“Soldiers are very sensitive to weight, especially on their head, and that's what we see in feedback on all of our equipment,” said Col. Bill Cole, project manager for Soldier Protection and Individual Equipment at Program Executive Office Soldier, Fort Belvoir, Va.

Another result of the study showed that every head shape and size was different. This meant that helmets needed to be fitted better, something that the

Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center is working on.

“Soldiers should receive the proper-size helmet with the proper-size pads to accommodate those differences in head shapes,” said Mike Codega, technological program manager at Natick.

“So we're toying with new shapes where we can smooth out that contour and possibly shape the interior of the helmet shell differently so we can incorporate larger pads if needed,” Cole said.

“And we're putting helmet sensors, called Generation 2, in our helmets,” said Brig. Gen. Peter Fuller, program executive officer at PEO Soldier.

He said the sensors would gather data for the medical community by recording the G forces that occur during blunt trauma and blast events. He added that the helmet sensors are scheduled to be deployed later this summer with six brigades. ♦

—Rob McIlvaine/ARNEWS

Cadet Command develops solid leaders

Story by Jeremy O'Bryan



Three hundred forty cadets were commissioned as second lieutenants following the 2010 Leader Development and Assessment Course at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. More than 6,000 cadets attend the course, also known as Operation Warrior Forge. (Photo by Al Zdarsky)

EVERY year the Army makes brand-new second lieutenants, whose job it becomes to lead American Soldiers. About 6,500 young men and women will become Army officers this year, most of them through the Army's ROTC programs at colleges and universities around the country.

The U.S. Army Cadet Command's Leader Development and Assessment Course, also known as Operation Warrior Forge, is held each summer from June to August at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. The course is an Army-directed prerequisite for commissioning, and is the single point of common training and assessment for every ROTC cadet who hopes to become an officer.

"We know that the leaders we develop here could be leading Soldiers in combat within 12 months of being commissioned," said Col. Charles Evans, commander of the course and of Cadet Command's 8th Brigade, which is headquartered at Lewis-McChord. Evans is responsible for the yearlong planning and execution cycle of LDAC.

"We take our responsibility for the development of future officers very seriously, and we understand how it contributes to the Army's mission," Evans said. "The course sets leadership standards for the future Army officer corps. This is an important function for the sustainment of the institutional Army that reinforces the reason this is an Army-level mission."

Packed with Army doctrine-based training and assessments, LDAC is principally focused on developing young leaders and ensuring those who are about to become lieutenants are qualified to do so. The event is a decisive element of the future Army leader's career.

Lieutenant Col. Brian Rogers sees that each cadre and staff member undergoes a validation process, so the entire supporting cast has an appreciation for what cadets experience. Rogers, formerly

“Every time I started to doubt myself or get psyched out, I leaned on my team and they supported me.”
—ROTC Cadet Caleb Pearl



Cadets endure a high-stress tactical environment that helps them learn and hone leadership skills during their time at Operation Warrior Forge, also known as the Leader Development and Assessment Course, the Army's largest annual training exercise. (Photo by Jesse Beals)

a professor of military science at the University of Washington in Seattle, is the chief of training and runs the planning cell for the mission.

More than 3,500 cadre and staff members support the course across the bustling 90,000-acre military base. The support teams comprise leaders from across the Army: active duty, Reserve, National Guard, civil service employees and civilian contractors. In addition, dozens of agencies at Joint Base Lewis-McChord provide crucial resources to support the training.

“LDAC provides our Army the opportunity to assess and evaluate leadership performance and potential,” Rogers said. “The leader development

process we use involves goal-oriented training in both technical and leadership skills, along with assessments and constructive feedback.

“Lessons learned during each assessment are used to redefine goals and structure future training for each cadet. Cadre within Cadet Command are trained in this process, maximizing their ability to coach and mentor cadets to continuous achievement, resulting in a professional, technically competent apprentice Army officer who possesses the self-confidence necessary to adapt on the modern battlefield,” Rogers added.

In all, more than 7,100 cadets will attend LDAC this summer, the largest

number since the course's inception. Cadets come from more than 1,300 colleges and universities nationwide, and reflect the diversity of the country.

As a result of the variety of Army ROTC entry options, cadets coming to LDAC range in age from 18 to 24. Some are only one year out of high school, while others are prior enlisted Soldiers who are seasoned combat veterans. Some are freshmen; some are advanced degree students. Most are between their junior and senior years of college. Cadets who have met all other degree and commissioning requirements may find LDAC to be their final hurdle before becoming lieutenants, and they may be commissioned on the parade field during the LDAC graduation ceremony.

The course also instills a sense of accomplishment and confidence in the cadets' ability to lead, and is one of the earliest experiences of true esprit de corps for these future Soldiers.

Having the support of battle buddies throughout the mental and physical stress of the LDAC is priceless, according to cadets. That support propelled Caleb Pearl across obstacles he may have mentally shied away from on his own. Pearl, from Olivet Nazarene University in Bourbonnais, Ill., finished LDAC in 2010.

“Every time I started to doubt myself or get psyched out, I leaned on my team and they supported me—clapping and shouting and encouraging me,” Pearl said. “It gave me the confidence to grab my gear and keep moving.” ♦

Jeremy O'Bryan works at U.S. Army Cadet Command.

Leader's Training Course evolves with Army

Story by Steve Arel



CONSIDER the Leader's Training Course an incubator:

Schools from around the country put in impressionable students with an interest in the military, and what emerges, after a month of nurturing, are motivated cadets poised to be future Army leaders.

This summer marks the 46th anniversary of the incubation process at Fort Knox, Ky., a process renowned as one of the world's best leadership development programs. Since 1965, the course has instilled the institutional military knowledge that forms the foundation for a lifetime of leadership.

Like the Army and the country it serves, much has changed since the first 900 cadets showed up for what was then called Basic Camp.

"Students take away from this skills they can apply not only in a military career, but also in the civilian world: time management, organization and self-discipline," said Col. Eric Winkie, the LTC commander. "These are traits

they can apply in all walks of life, as a student and as a person. They take away more than just military training."

The first wave of college students looking to become Army officers arrives in early June for the start of the annual course.

Some 700 men and women are expected to train at the post during the summer as part of the program put on by the Army ROTC. Four groups of roughly 175 cadets each will cycle through the course over several weeks, with the last group graduating July 28.

The students represent schools from across the country, coming from as far away as Puerto Rico and Guam.

This summer's attendance will be smaller than usual, but the course remains pivotal in developing the Army's future leaders.

Known today as LTC, the course was born from the ROTC Vitalization Act of 1964. The legislation aimed to beef up officer candidate rolls and attract higher-quality prospects by of-

fering incentives to join the program.

Perhaps most notable were scholarships and larger subsistence allowances for cadets in the ROTC advanced course. But the package also introduced an abbreviated curriculum option for students who did not enroll in ROTC as freshmen but later developed an interest in the program, opening a new market that included junior and community college students.

Congress' backing authorized 5,500 two- and four-year scholarships, hiked the cadet monthly subsistence allowance from roughly \$27 to \$50 and established a two-year ROTC program. The shortened program paved the way for LTC, creating a six-week basic camp for students who did not complete the basic ROTC course before their final two years on campus and, who could, upon completion, enter the advanced course.

That first class in 1965 encountered training similar to traditional basic training, although cadets had a portion

"Students take away from this skills they can apply not only in a military career, but also in the civilian world."

—Col. Eric Winkie



(Far left) A muddied cadet takes aim at a mock target during an individual tactical training exercise at the 2010 Leader's Training Course on Fort Knox, Ky. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Cadet Command)

(Left) A cadet takes instructions while scaling down the Leader's Training Course's 51-foot-high rappel tower. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Cadet Command)

(Right) Cadets reporting for training last summer at the Leader's Training Course are reflected in the sunglasses of an awaiting drill sergeant. (Photo courtesy of the Leader's Training Course)



of their instruction devoted to leadership. The course centered on basic Soldier skills such as rifle marksmanship, map and compass reading and physical training.

While nearly 3,000 cadets once attended the course in a single summer, as the Army's staffing needs diminished, so did the number of students. Over the years, the course has been retooled to produce stronger officer candidates. The basic course became Camp Challenge in the early 1980s. That moniker endured for two decades until it changed again in 2002 to the LTC.

The name, officials say, is a truer reflection of the summer offering. The focus of the course, now 29 days long, has changed from basic Soldier skills to leadership; cadets spend more time heading up squads and platoons and overseeing tactical activities.

As the director of training for

LTC in 2002 and 2003, retired Col. Robert Frusha was involved in many of the changes that shaped the current training. His mission was to make LTC more engaging.

Before the course modifications, Frusha said the training was "bland and unexciting." As a result, many cadets left without signing on to ROTC. The goal was to strike a balance.

"Don't make it kiddy-camp, but don't make it 'basic training' hard," Frusha said. That was the idea.

A major change was the addition of the six-day field training exercise known as Bold Leader, where cadets spend three nights outdoors and perform situational training exercises.

The course is progression-based. It begins with training in areas like drill and ceremony and military customs. Cadets then advance to individual skills then collective skills while being placed in leadership positions throughout.

More ROTC cadre were also added, including professors of military science from across the country and

newly minted second lieutenants, who serve as squad tactical officers and mentors. Cadets also receive frequent, personalized feedback on their progress.

The first year after the changes went into effect, contracting rates (the rates at which cadets sign contracts to serve as Army officers) climbed above 71 percent. They have stayed in that range ever since.

Organizing the LTC is a year-round mission. Training site scheduling begins 18 months in advance, and choosing specific types of training begins in earnest the day after a course ends. Organizers use after-action reviews to evaluate positives and negatives and how best to improve the program.

Although LTC is designed to replicate the training a student would have received on campus their freshman and sophomore years, it goes far beyond the traditional program to give cadets an experience unlike any other. ♦

Steve Arel works at U.S. Army Cadet Command.

Paws of healing:



Service dogs help soothe wounds of war

Story and photos by Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown

SEATED in a circle of chairs, members of the group took turns giving the dog commands.

"Whitney, lap!" said one member.

A young, golden-haired retriever sporting a purple service vest bounded to the appropriate chair and plopped her two front paws in the caller's lap, looking up with anticipation.

"Good girl, Whitney!" The participant said, rewarding the dog with a handful of Cheerios.

Another dog, Yoko, looked on intently from a grooming table, waiting for her turn to train. In a few more months, Yoko and Whitney would be ready to work full-time as service dogs to disabled veterans, helping with tasks such as opening doors, turning lights on and off and retrieving dropped items.

From the Paws for Purple Hearts organization, Whitney and Yoko are part of a nationwide trend toward enlisting the help of man's best friend as an emotional salve for the lasting effects of war.

Soldiers returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan often bear the hidden scars, now called the "signature wounds" of combat: post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury. An estimated one in five servicemembers who have been deployed suffer from PTSD, according to a 2008 Rand study.

From in-patient care to computer-based virtual worlds, the Army is employing several methods to help



Chief Warrant Officer 4 Francis Young walks with Yoko, the Labrador he's helping train to become a service dog for a disabled veteran. Paws for Purple Hearts dogs require about two years of training before they are certified to help with tasks such as opening doors, turning lights on and off and retrieving dropped items.

counter emotional scarring. More recently, service dog organizations began to realize the companionship and responsibility that come from working with animals could help soothe PTSD.

Rick Yount, program director for Paws for Purple Hearts—where wounded Soldiers help train service dogs for more seriously disabled veterans—said the program's success could, in part, be attributed to duty.

Duty to fellow veterans is something all Soldiers take seriously, Yount said, and in some cases, it may be the only reason they have to get up in the morning.

"It sounds so simple," Yount said of his organization's comprehensive approach. "But there's nothing wrong with simple answers to difficult problems."

The psychology behind why Yount's program works is a bit more complicated—yet, he said, working with dogs sometimes reaches those with the most severe PTSD.

Canine comfort

Yount, a social worker for 24 years, explained that the idea for Paws for Purple Hearts came to him one day while watching the news. In 2006, Yount had already been working as a service dog trainer at Bergin University in California, and while watching the increasing reports about servicemembers returning from deployments with PTSD and TBI, he realized they would be excellent service dog trainers.

Yount explained that many wounded Soldiers suffering from PTSD are emotionally numb, and may try to isolate themselves. Furthermore, he said PTSD is also sometimes coupled with depression, insomnia, hyper-vigilance and nervousness in crowds.

The program—which began at the Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System's Menlo Park, Calif., facility in 2008—has branched out to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington. The WRAMC program, sponsored by Finmeccanica-North America,



Whitney, a Paws for Purple Hearts dog, is nearly finished with her training. Once she graduates from the Paws program, she will be placed with a disabled veteran.

is located near the Warrior Transition Battalion, so recovering Soldiers have easy access.

Yount said since the program started, about 150 servicemembers have participated in the training. Upon completion of about two years of training, the service dogs are placed with disabled veterans free of charge.

Yount explained that working with the animals is especially beneficial for those with emotional numbness, because the training forces troops to get back in touch with those neglected feelings.

"There's no way you can isolate when you have a service dog and you're training in the community," Yount said. "People are going to come up to you and interact with you—there's no way out of it."

Yount explained how the approach follows a complementary cognitive-behavioral therapy method. In order to give dogs proper commands and praise, Soldiers have to appear happy and excited when a dog excels. Furthermore, troops have to reassure a dog that loud noises, busy streets and large crowds are safe and normal.

"You have to learn how to sound like Richard Simmons," Yount quipped about training and giving praise to dogs.

The beauty of the process is that while reassuring a dog in training, Soldiers are also teaching themselves that they are safe, Yount explained.

"I have to challenge my automatic thoughts immediately to praise this dog and tell him that a car backfiring is a great thing, and that it's OK," Yount said.

He added that the dogs are also a "social lubricant," stimulating interactions with the public. For those who have become withdrawn, the dogs become an instant conversation starter, one that Soldiers cannot ignore.



Sgt. Seyward McKinney (third from left at top), participates in a work and education internship called Paws for Purple Hearts at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington, Jan. 20. McKinney, an operating room specialist who is partially paralyzed on the right side of her body, says she enjoys the companionship of the dogs and likes doing something for other veterans.



Chief Warrant Officer 4 Francis Young waits for Yoko to respond to a command while Whitney takes a break from training at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington.

Lives changed

Yount said servicemembers have credited training service dogs with saving their lives and marriages and improving their parenting abilities. He said one Soldier who required heavy sleep-aid medication due to severe insomnia slept six hours straight the first night he took one of the dogs home. Another Soldier told Yount the program saved his marriage because prior to working with the dogs, he was treating his pre-schooler like a private.

"Learning to train this dog taught me how to give praise and how to connect with my 3-year-old," the Soldier said.

The companionship and solace provided by the dogs have changed some troops' lives.

"We have powerful anecdotal evidence of more than one veteran saying 'this dog saved my life,'" Yount explained.

Often working with the dogs not only gives the Soldiers comfort and something to look forward to, but also provides a sense of purpose, Yount said.

"I've spent almost 30 years in the military and there's a reason for it," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Francis Young,

"Learning to train this dog taught me how to give praise and how to connect with my 3-year-old."

who first joined the Army in 1976. "It's a way of life that's a brotherhood...I'd like to give back."

The helicopter pilot began working with Paws for Purple Hearts about a year ago after he was sent to Walter Reed for neck surgery. Young, who said he's compounded several injuries and may need more surgeries after "playing Army too long," saw the Paws team walking outside one day and simply asked the trainers about the program.

"I find it very therapeutic," Young said. "I've always been around animals, and grew up with them and I enjoy working with the dogs."

Young explained that he would be seeking a service dog himself to help him with balance after he's discharged, and added that he'd like to see more Soldiers participating in the program.

"There's a lot of dogs that are needed, so the more people you have to train them, the more service dogs there will be," said Young.

Sergeant Seyward McKinney, an operating room specialist who is partially paralyzed on the right side of her body, said she enjoys the prospect of training the dogs for other veterans.

"I'm definitely glad to be helping others, but at the same time the training's beneficial for me too, so it's a win-win," she said.

McKinney has a brain arterio-venous malformation, or AVM: an abnormal connection between arteries and veins that appears as tangles of normal and dilated blood vessels. Following treatment for her AVM, she suffered a stroke, which caused the partial paralysis.

"Being able to have the companionship of the dogs and teach them how to do things is the best," McKinney said of the program. She added that giving the dogs commands has helped her with the rehabilitation of her voice, which was also damaged by the stroke.

McKinney has also applied for a service dog once she completes her recovery. She said she's planning to fly to California—where the dogs finalize their training—in April to pick one out. Young was quick to point out that the dogs are the ones who do the picking.

Comprehensive recovery

Lieutenant Col. Matthew St. Laurent, the assistant chief of occupational therapy at Walter Reed, said training dogs for other wounded veterans fits well into the Warrior Transition Battalion's requirement that all Soldiers participate in a "work and education" program.

Injury permitting, St. Laurent explained that most of the wounded warriors assigned to Walter Reed must pursue an interest or activity not related to their physical recovery to prepare them for life after the hospital. With a focus on reintegration, Soldiers engage in college classes, participate in on- and off-post internships and work on their resumes and interview skills.

"There's a lot of things we try to do with our patients with mental health concerns, and this is just one of them,"

St. Laurent said. “In this program you get instant feedback.”

St. Laurent said that Paws for Purple Hearts is considered an internship, and Soldiers can participate from a few months up to a year, depending on how long their projected stay at Walter Reed is. They are required to be on time, ready to train on the days of the week they signed up for.

“What brings them out of their rooms is that they know they have a living, breathing animal that needs them,” said Heidi Bonorato, an instructor and dog trainer for Paws for Purple Hearts.

Bonorato and trainer Carolyn

Ford said they have witnessed changes in many of the Soldiers participating in the program. Ford said she often notices increased interaction between the Soldiers in the program as well as Soldier’s facial expressions changing—as if they can feel emotions again.

“I thought there was no better experience than working with sick animals,” said Bonorato, a former animal hospital worker. “But now I not only get to work with dogs, but (I) get to work with wounded warriors. It’s extremely rewarding.”

Neither Ford nor Bonorato had worked in a military setting before.

“To meet the Soldiers and have them share their experiences makes me certainly have a lot more respect for the military,” Ford said.

“I feel like this is a really great opportunity for me to give back,” Bonorato agreed.

Giving back has proven to be a common thread in the Paws for Purple Hearts theme. The first service dog Yount trained for the program was Gabriel, a golden retriever he received as a gift from a Marine friend. Yount explained that his friend gave him the puppy 15 years ago when he was going through a rough time.

“The program has truly come full circle,” Yount said, adding that Gabriel has now fathered many of the service dogs in the program. “You never know where a simple act of kindness will lead.”

Paws for Purple Hearts is not the only service-dog organization for wounded veterans—many others train and donate dogs using their own methods, such as Paws4Vets, Hero Dogs Inc., Patriot Paws, Vet Dogs, Freedom Service Dogs and Puppies Behind Bars.

“It’s not for everybody, but it seems to work on the people who are struggling the most,” Yount said of dog-training programs.

He said that the program has done much better than he first expected. Plans are now underway to conduct research at the National Intrepid Center of Excellence to provide viable statistics on the benefits of PTSD patients working with service dogs. He also hopes to expand the program to five additional VA locations in the future.

For Yount, the most rewarding aspect of the program is the lives that are changed through canine companionship.

“I don’t think there’s anything better than having one of our wounded warriors expressing that getting involved in this program saved their life...that’s the most meaningful thing that I could hear.” ♦



Sgt. Seyward McKinney teaches Whitney how to provide balance support while navigating uneven terrain such as stairs, Jan. 20.

Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown worked for the Army News Service at the time this article was written.

THERE'S sand and then there's *sand*.

Sand is dirty and can be the bane of Soldiers' existence. It leaves a fine layer of grit over everything, even getting into the engines of vehicles and the cracks of weapons. It can violently churn across the desert, taking only seconds to spin into intense, blinding sandstorms.

Sand, however, is white and soft and powdery, bordered by turquoise-blue water and dotted with palm trees. For Soldiers who spend months shaking the former out of everything they own, *sand* is the stuff of dreams.

Those dreams are easy to grasp thanks to U.S. Central Command's Rest & Recuperation Leave Program, which more than 1 million servicemembers have taken advantage of since 2003.

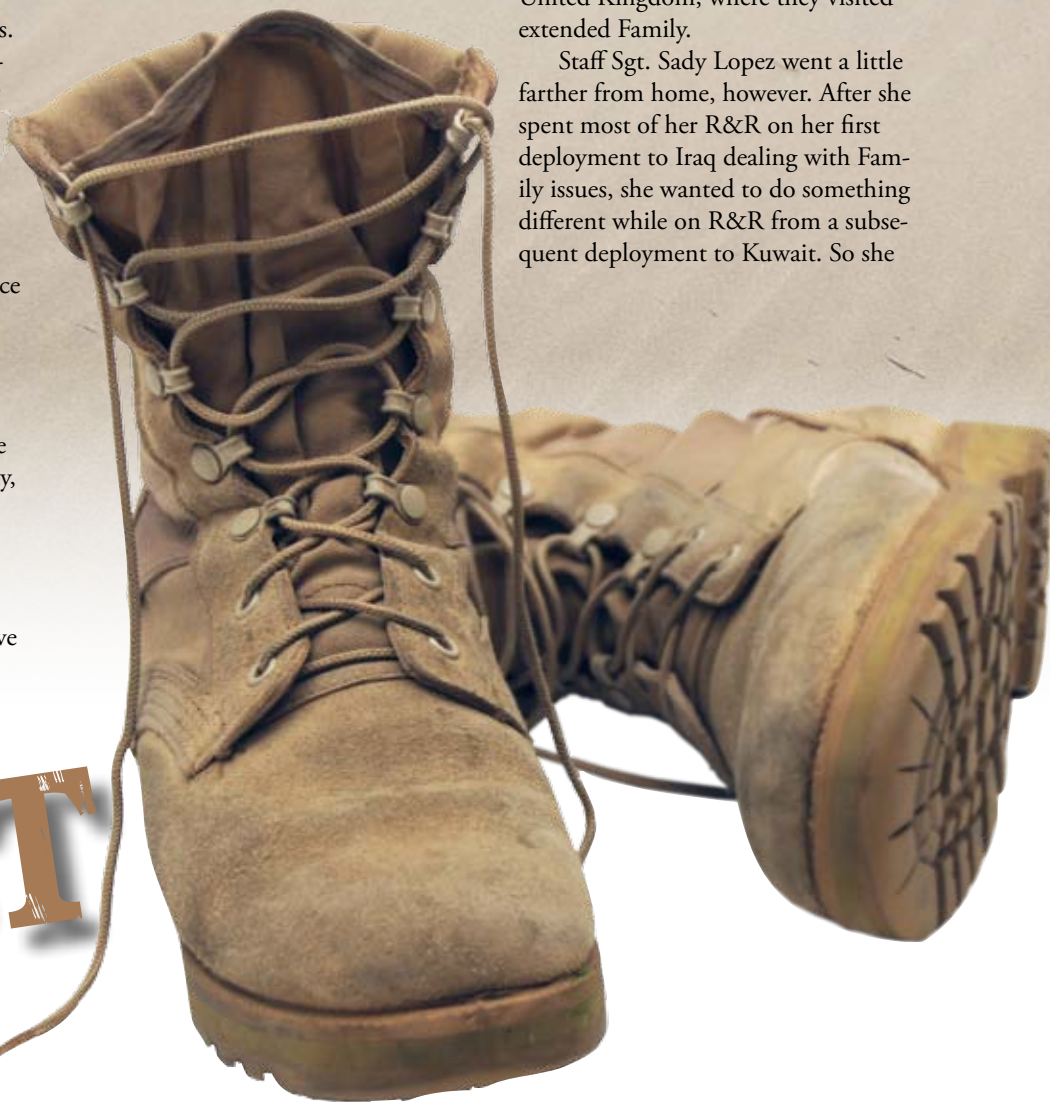
Servicemembers and DOD civilians are eligible for up to 15 days of uncharged leave after spending 270 days in Iraq, Afghanistan or elsewhere in CENTCOM's area of responsibility, according to Lt. Col. David Homza, the chief of R&R Policy at Army G-1, which runs the program for the Department of Defense. ALARACT 106/2010 outlines the uncharged leave policy.

The vast majority of participants take government-chartered commercial flights back to the States to see Family (see inset article), but some choose to take advantage of the free airfare and central location of the Middle East to travel abroad. In the past year alone, Soldiers have visited Europe, Australia, Argentina, Tahiti and Fiji and other destinations.

"Everyone wants to travel internationally every once in a while,"

said Spc. Kelly Iser, who travelled to England and Scotland on her R&R in September 2010. "It's one of their goals to go to different countries, and this is a paid trip by the (military) to get you to that place. It's a good idea. I've heard different stories about Soldiers who go home versus Soldiers who go international. I've heard it's better to do the international than to go home." It was the best of both worlds for Iser, whose mother and brother met her in the United Kingdom, where they visited extended Family.

Staff Sgt. Sady Lopez went a little farther from home, however. After she spent most of her R&R on her first deployment to Iraq dealing with Family issues, she wanted to do something different while on R&R from a subsequent deployment to Kuwait. So she



REST
and

recuperation for the troops

Story by Elizabeth M. Collins

and her boyfriend, Sgt. 1st Class Heath Hestand, both of the 1107th Aviation Group, Missouri National Guard, decided to go down under.

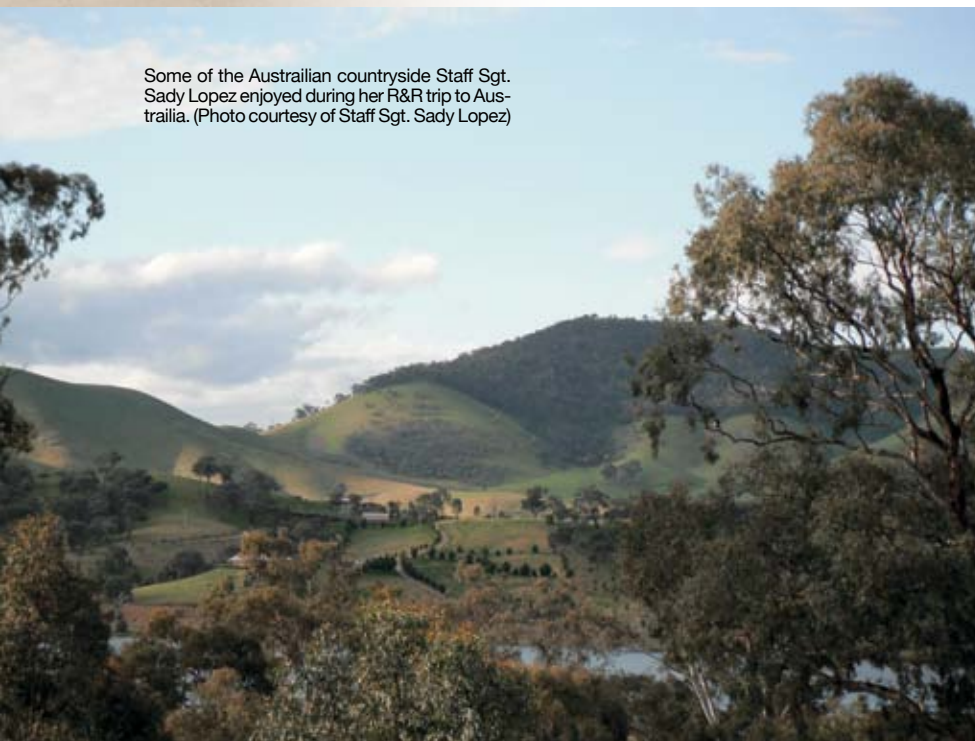
At 18 hours, their travel time from Kuwait to Sydney seemed short compared to the 24-plus hours it usually takes to get to Australia from the States, and she barely noticed any jet lag. And because the plane had two levels and seats that folded into beds—a first for Lopez—she was able to sleep during much of the flight.

Soldiers like Lopez and Iser who decide to travel abroad during R&R have to fill out a lot of paperwork—more than Soldiers who go home—

mostly to fulfill customs and visa requirements. They also have to undergo extra security training. Once that's complete, Homza said all the servicemembers have to do once they arrive at the Kuwait International Airport in Farwaniyah, Kuwait, however, is tell government travel agents at the gate where they're going. The agents will then book them on the next flight. Iser and Lopez said they only had to wait for a few hours in Kuwait before they were on their way.

They did face one complication: neither had more than one

Some of the Australian countryside Staff Sgt. Sady Lopez enjoyed during her R&R trip to Australia. (Photo courtesy of Staff Sgt. Sady Lopez)



(Above) A carved crusader rests on a tree outside a church on the Isle of Wight, United Kingdom. (Photo courtesy of Spc. Kelly Iser)

Spc. Kelly Iser poses outside the entrance to the Tower of London, one of many stops on her U.K. R&R trip. (Photo courtesy of Spc. Kelly Iser)



(Below) Britain's Houses of Parliament in London, which Spc. Kelly Iser visited while on R&R from Iraq in 2010. (Photo courtesy of Spc. Kelly Iser)





A Victorian pier in Eastbourne, United Kingdom. (Photo courtesy of Spc. Kelly Iser)

or two sets of civilian clothes. But relatives in the States were happy to send them, and they were soon headed off—one to pet Koala bears (one of Lopez's favorite parts of her Australia adventure) and the other, to tour the castles of England.

"Right now, I'm running low on castles to go to," Iser confessed. "There are some great castles and old churches. It's great to walk around some of the old towns. You don't really have to have a specific destination. Just the walking around is a lot nicer than the States." And in addition to the usual sights of Parliament and Madame Tussauds, she also visited the Sherlock Holmes Museum and spent several days in Scotland.

The break, both Soldiers said, was the best thing that could have happened, although Iser added that it was several days before her brain joined her body on vacation and she was able to stop worrying about what she was missing back in Iraq.

"It was great. It was like shutting off the brain, to not have to worry about doing any projects or keeping up to date with what's going on. It was a little hard to shut off my brain when I first started. I still wanted to know what I was missing out on, but it was a pretty good vacation. It was perfect timing."

Lopez said that because her R&R came near the end of her deployment, returning to the grind wasn't so difficult. "By the time we got back we only had two months left until we came

home. It just made coming back a whole lot easier. It's always very hectic. It was definitely an awesome break to take it at that time."

She and her boyfriend explored Sydney, from the Opera House to the Sydney Zoo and Sydney Tower, which offered views of the ocean.

"It's pretty much like New York," Lopez said of Sydney. "It never goes to sleep. People are always on the street. In the morning you see the crazy crowd, going to school or going to their jobs, but if they push you, they might actually say, 'I'm sorry. Are you OK?' They're actually more caring, but they do have the same fast food, they have Starbucks, they have McDonalds."

Lopez's favorite part of the trip, however, was the 8-hour drive south from Sydney to a country resort on a lake in Marshfield, where they went hiking and canoeing and even tried kangaroo—a delicious, firmer version of steak.

"You get to see the countryside and those hills are amazing. You have these views of the valley. I guess they have some kind of weed that is yellow and it covers the fields. It's beautiful. It's something that I have never experienced before," she said.

"My second favorite was definitely touching the koala," she continued. "Those little things are adorable. You just want to take them home with you.

They're so soft. It's amazing how soft they are. Some of them are friendly. Some of them are not. There were a few at the local zoo and I got to pet them and take pictures with them. That was priceless."

Equally priceless: international thanks and recognition. If Lopez and her boyfriend had gone back to the States, they would have received heroes' welcomes, but it turned out that the people of Australia were equally grateful for their service.

"When we told them why we were there, a lot of people over there were very welcoming," Lopez explained. "They were very happy and proud of what America was doing over there. And of course, Australia at the time also had soldiers in Afghanistan who were working with the Army as well, and they were very proud of their soldiers.

"That's nice to know, that we are known worldwide, and there's other people as well who appreciate what we do and are contributing to what we do. It's definitely worth it knowing that. It makes you happy and it makes you proud and it makes you continue doing what you're doing, just for those individuals." ♦

Editor's note: For more information about the R&R Leave Program, visit <http://www.armyg1.army.mil/randr>.

A peacock struts on a farm Staff Sgt. Sady Lopez visited while on R&R in Australia. (Photo courtesy of Staff Sgt. Sady Lopez)





Soldiers coming home on R&R through the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport get a heroes' welcome. (Photo courtesy of Army G-1)

Coming home on R&R

By Elizabeth M. Collins

SOLDIERS, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen who decide to return to the States during R&R, fly via military aircraft from their assignments in Iraq or Afghanistan to the Kuwait International Airport and wait for the next available commercial charter flight back to the U.S., Lt. Col. David E. Homza, Rest & Recuperation policy chief said.

At least two flights run back and forth each day—one to Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport and a second to Dallas Fort Worth International Airport—both making short stops in Leipzig, Germany. Atlanta and Dallas were chosen, Homza said, because the Department of Defense wants to get servicemembers home as quickly as possible, and their southern locations make winter weather delays unlikely (although not impossible). The two airports are also within driving distance or require only short hops to many major installations including Forts Stewart and Benning, Ga.; Fort Campbell, Ky.; and Forts Hood and Bliss, Texas.

The flights are far from the rough, uncomfortable ride many Soldiers have experienced on military aircraft. They're much like any other international commercial flights, said Annette Jardine, an Air Force mom. Jardine is also a flight attendant and purser with North American Airlines, the airline that, along with its parent company, World Airlines, runs most of the flights. During the eight-plus-hour flights, servicemembers receive multiple meals and (nonalcoholic) drinks, and can watch a variety of movies—often before they're released on DVD.

But unlike most commercial flights, servicemembers also get a friendly ear. Jardine and her fellow flight attendants have listened to Soldiers talk about everything from how

great it is to go home to how hard it is on the battlefield to impending divorces.

"Sometimes it's just to give them a friendly voice to talk to, someone to just listen. I think sometimes they just want someone to listen and be a sounding board. Even though we try not to play psychologists, it's hard. You kind of have to think of life experiences. You just talk about them and share it," she said, adding that many of the young men she meets remind her of her 24-year-old son.

Regular international flights also don't get quite the same welcome when they touch down on U.S. soil. Flight Capt. R.K. Smithley always passes on the thanks and appreciation of the air traffic controllers and asks the servicemembers to "make some noise" and show how happy they are to be home.

"That usually gets a pretty good response with cheers and yells and hooahs, particularly from the Army guys. They usually let us hear them pretty loud and proud when we're up front after we land the plane," he said, adding that the Dallas-Fort Worth Fire and Rescue squad meets each military flight coming into Dallas with a truck on each wing. They shoot water across the front of the plane in a gesture usually reserved to honor captains on their final flights.

"It's fantastic," Jardine explained. "No matter how many times I've seen it, I still get excited to see it again. They shoot water at the airplane on both sides with the fire trucks and then the USO is always there waiting with people and they're cheering and thanking everybody. It tugs at your heart. It's really sweet. I think for a lot of (Soldiers), it's a surprise when they come home and they get that kind of greeting." ♦

Selfless civilian service

Soldiers Creed

lives in Army civilians, contractor

Story and photos by Mike Cast

MAY 21, 2009: Aberdeen Test Center employees Douglas Mauzy, Mark Henry and Joseph Gray were conducting an accuracy and fire-control test in a Soviet-era T-55 tank at the H-Field Firing Range on the Edgewood Area of Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.

Henry was supporting the test as the tank commander, Gray was the gunner and Mauzy was driving the tank.

At about 9:30, the crew fired the second high-explosive round of the morning. After traveling about 16 inches down the barrel, the round exploded, according to an Army safety report.

As soon as he heard the explosion, fellow ATC employee Christopher Raab knew something went wrong. He directed Philip Sibley Jr. to contact the range tower and request medical assistance.



(Left to right) Aberdeen, Md., Test Center's Kevin Banigan, Tony Hardy and Christopher Raab received the Secretary of the Army Award for Valor for actions following the explosion of a Soviet-made tank round.

Raab grabbed co-worker Michael Williams, jumped into the ammunition truck and drove down the range road to where the tank had stopped. Raab and Williams ran 100 meters into the unexploded ordnance area and initiated the rescue effort. They extracted Henry from the tank and started CPR.

After contacting the range tower, Sibley ran after the tank, following its tracks through the swamp. When

he arrived, he mounted the tank and helped Gray out. More ATC employees joined the effort. Kevin Banigan drove Anthony Hardy to the accident scene to help Mauzy, who had rolled off the tank into the swamp. Hardy, a contractor supporting the test center, carried him to the range road and administered first aid while Banigan went into the swamp to help.

Robert Puckett, another test center team member, remained at the range tower and helped coordinate medical assistance. Richard Drennan and Harry Poynter guided emergency medical technicians from the APG Fire Depart-

Philip Sibley called the range tower for medical assistance after a Soviet-made tank round exploded during testing at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., May 21, 2009. He then ran after the burning tank into a swampy field containing unexploded ordnance to render further assistance.



ment to the accident site and helped move the injured testers from the swamp to a nearby berm.

Henry was pronounced dead at the scene, and a state medical evacuation helicopter flew Gray and Mauzy to Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center in Baltimore. On June 5, 2009, Gray succumbed to his injuries. Mauzy, who received third-degree burns over more than 70 percent of his body, has undergone extensive surgeries to repair the burn damage and medical rehabilitation.

In a March 3 ceremony at APG's recreation center, the civilian employees and contractor who supported the test mission that fateful day in 2009 were honored for their service.

Major Gen. Genaro Dellarocco, commanding general, Army Test and



A firing range at the Edgewood Area of Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., was renamed for the commander of the tank.



One of Aberdeen, Md., Test Center's range facilities was named for the tank gunner who died from his injuries.

Evaluation Command, presented the Secretary of the Army Award for Valor to Banigan, Raab, Sibley and Williams, for risking their lives for their comrades. Richard Drennan, Harry Poynter and Robert Puckett received the Commander's Award for Civilian Service for their support, and Hardy received an award from his company and a memorandum of appreciation signed by Col. Jeffrey Holt, ATC commander.

Mauzy, the only survivor from the range accident, was not in attendance, but was awarded the Superior Civilian Service Award for his support to ATC's test mission during several years of federal service.

During their remarks at the award ceremony, Dellarocco and Holt praised the selfless service of the ATC test-support employees and the contracted employee who rendered aid on the day of the accident. They spoke of acts of heroism that day, as well as the many years of selfless service the accident victims and their companions have dedicated to the Army and Soldiers.

Holt said the awardees "did everything they could in the face of tragedy to take care of their teammates, and after the catastrophic explosion of that round, gave them every chance they could at life and recovery. They did that at great personal risk. They moved through unexploded ordnance to a vehicle that caught fire soon after it came to a halt."

Dellarocco spoke of the selfless service that Army civilians and contractors provide to

Soldiers, and noted that it can involve an equal measure of sacrifice. He said he read the report of what happened on the day of the accident "over and over," and that it had a profound impact on him.

"The kind of work that they do here at Aberdeen is part of our national plan," he said of test-support personnel at ATC. "They help us provide the very best equipment to the Department of Defense, and there is some risk involved. That was evident on that fateful day in May. They put the mission first. They never gave up. They didn't accept defeat. No one turned and ran. They climbed aboard that burning vehicle, risking their own lives, and they didn't leave a comrade behind."

Of the accident victims, he said, "Every American fighting person counted on these gentlemen to execute their duties. In this case they were figuring out what the enemy was going to use against us so we could build better equipment and defeat theirs. Selfless service, that's what it was." ♦

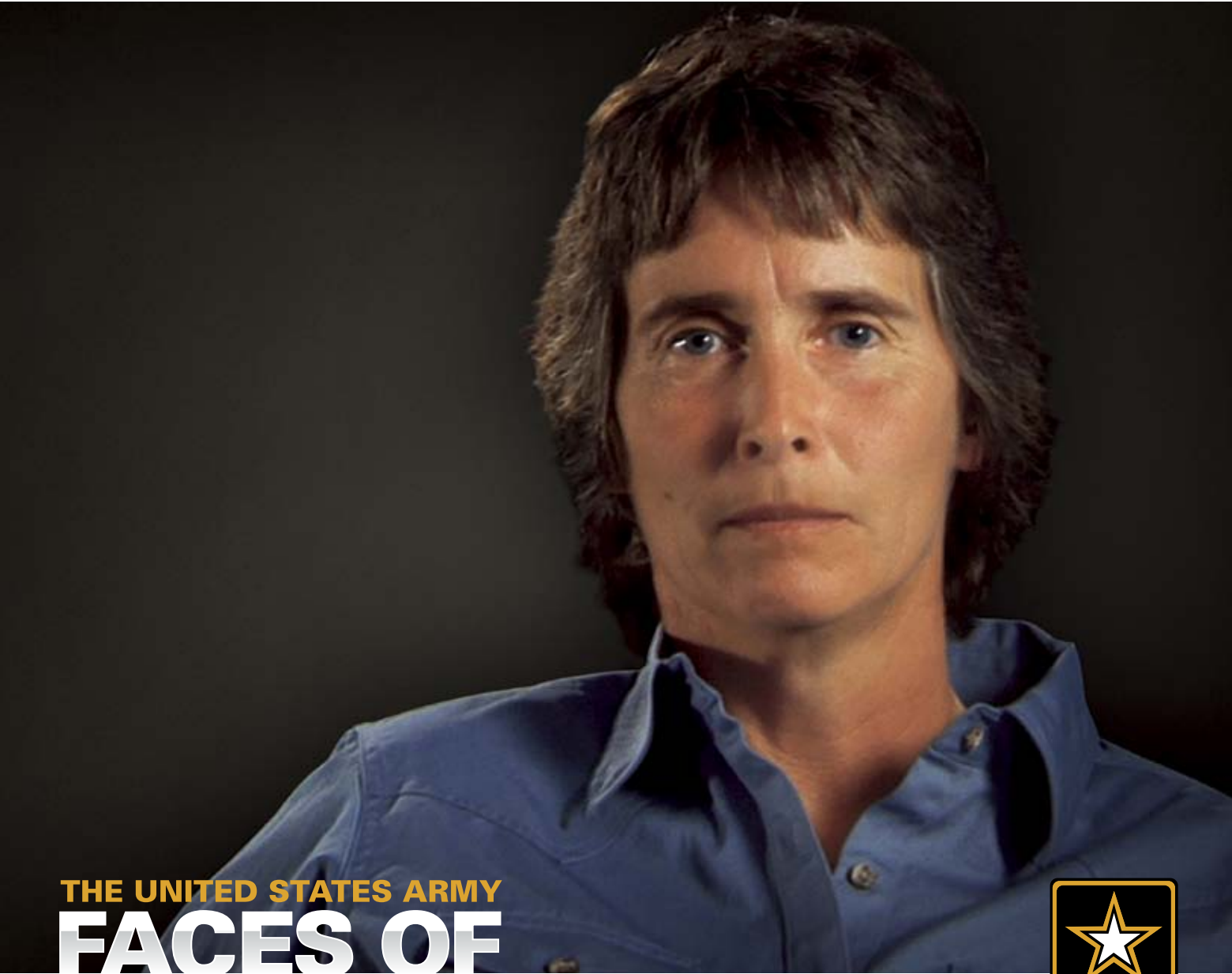
Editor's note: An Army investigation of the accident did not pinpoint the exact cause of the explosion in the tank barrel, but it included various recommendations to enhance the safety of test personnel firing ordnance in support of the test mission.



Aberdeen Test Center's Tony Hardy installs equipment used for testing on the main gun of an Abrams tank.

Mike Cast works at the Army Developmental Test Command.

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Lorraine Melgosa

Lorraine Melgosa has found her life's calling. To the Families of a number of fallen Soldiers, she's provided the military services their loved ones so deserved. It all started when a hometown Soldier, Justin Vasquez was killed in action. Melgosa wanted to honor the local hero. So, she and her brother provided a unique circa 1900 horse-drawn carriage they owned to carry Vasquez to

his final resting place. And then they did it for another Soldier, and then another. As of today, Melgosa has provided that honor for military funerals throughout the Southwest and even as far north as Michigan—all at her own expense. As one mother appreciatively said, "I knew this was the right way for my son to go." Just one small way for her to show her appreciation.

The nation's strength starts here.

SOLDIERS
LEADERS
CIVILIANS
FAMILIES

Take 5

before hitting
the mud!

4 Wheelin'

- Always perform a pre-ride inspection of your ATV
- Wear the proper protective equipment and bright-colored clothing to increase visibility to others
- Ride in the company of others and tell someone at home where you going and when you plan to return
- Carry along a first-aid pack, tool/repair kit and some snacks and drinking water
- Don't let children ride ATVs that are too tall or powerful for their capabilities
- Check the riding area for potential hazards
- Avoid following too closely behind another rider
- Don't mix alcohol or other drugs while riding
- Do not carry passengers unless the ATV is equipped to do so



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